

BIRDWATCHING *Group*

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NEWSLETTER MARCH 2025

TONIGHT'S MEETING (6th March)

Tonight speaker is Chris Tynan who will give a talk entitled "Birding the Liverpool Bay"

In 2018, Chris Tynan received the RSPB Presidents Award. The Presidents award is given to 5 volunteers every year to highlight outstanding volunteering to the RSPB.

Chris has been the RSPB Liverpool Local Group leader for over 20 years. He gives talks to varied local groups and is a regular nature watcher on BBC Radio Merseyside on a Saturday morning. He is described by those who know him as inspirational and his energy and enthusiasm for birds and wildlife have ensured a large number of people in Merseyside care deeply about nature.

I believe that this is Chris's first visit to the Group.

Please join me in welcoming Chris for what I am sure will be a very entertaining evening.

COACH TRIPS

Our next coach trip is on Sunday 23rd March to Blacktoft Sands and Old Moor reserves departing from the Guild at 7:30am.

Both reserves are predominantly wetland. Old Moor is mainly open water which attracts numerous wildfowl and water birds while Blacktoft has extensive reedbeds and is excellent for marsh harrier and is where bittern and bearded tit are possible. There are also reedbeds with marsh harrier, bittern and bearded tits at Old Moor.

Old Moor reserve is located in the Dearne Valley near Barnsley, Yorkshire while Blacktoft Sands reserve is located on the south bank of the River Ouse in East Yorkshire. Both sites have numerous hides and feeders that attract small birds. Visitor facilities are available at both. Both sites are RSPB reserves so members should bring their cards.

The next coach trip after that is on Sunday 27th April to Top Hill Low reserve in Yorkshire departing from the Guild at 7:30am.

Book your seat for both trips at the desk.

COACH TRIP TO THE NORTH LANCS COAST – 19 JANUARY 2025

What a start to the New Year! Very heavy rain overnight on New Year's Eve caused severe flooding and left Wilmslow virtually cut off from everywhere. Then from 5th January we had snow and freezing temperatures resulting in treacherous icy conditions until the 14th of the month. So it was with slight apprehension that 26 members, dressed as if for an Arctic expedition, clambered aboard the coach at 8 o'clock. The sky was overcast, it was dry and calm with the temperature hovering around 2°C.

We were heading for the North Lancashire coast, last visited 6 years ago in January 2019. Our first stop, **Knott End**, situated at the mouth of the River Wyre was reached by 9.30 am. Here, the group split, some set off to try and find the reported Black Redstart, others headed for the Esplanade. The Redstart was supposedly to be seen in the locale of a block of flats and a nearby hotel. Brian managed to see it for all of two seconds before it flew down to a gully and out of sight. There were a couple of birders who were there before us, who had also seen it. A good half hour later we returned to the same spot, to find the same couple still there and the bird frustratingly still out of sight. Suddenly it flew up and away between the hotel and another building.



Great Black-backed Gull

Reluctantly we gave up and walked towards the Esplanade to join the group. Those members who had come here first were well rewarded with good views of 5 Twite on a roof top. At the end of the Esplanade it was possible to walk down a concrete ramp/slipway taking care as it was slippery with a green algae and small puddles of sea water. The tide was well out revealing a vast expanse of sand with some waders, Redshank, Turnstones, Curlew feeding, a handful of Wigeon resting under a small pier and in the distance a line of Oystercatchers. A few gulls wheeled overhead, Herring, Lesser Black-backed and Great Black-backed. A Peregrine Falcon was perched up on the side of a silo adjacent to the river.



Eurasian Oystercatcher



Pink-footed Geese (including leucistic goose)



Song Thrush

Back then on to the coach and our next stop **Pilling Lane End**. We followed the footpath skirting a saturated field where a Song Thrush and Blackbird were enjoying the easy pickings in the soft ground. Out on the marsh there were at least 500 Pink-footed Geese, Shelduck, Little Egret and Curlew. A Marsh Harrier was hunting over his territory and in the distance was a huge mixed flock of Starlings and Lapwings.



Eurasian Wigeon (males and females)

Our next destination was **Glasson Basin Marina** about 30 minutes further on. Most of the group took advantage of this to have their lunch whilst travelling. From the coach we had excellent views from both sides over the fields where flocks of at least 200 Lapwing and smaller groups of Mute Swans were busily feeding. Further on we pulled into a small lay-by close to the River Conder. Here the river had formed a wide sweep with a deep channel and extensive mud banks on either side. There were plenty

of Teal in beautiful plumage, Tufted Duck, a pair of Little Grebes, 3 Greylag Geese, Black-headed Gulls and Curlew.



Dunlins

Glasson Docks is a site of almost two differing habitats. On one side of the road is the marina, a quiet sheltered stretch of water on which were Mute Swans, Cormorant, Coot and one lone male Goldeneye. Across the road is the sea wall with views over the River Lune and out to the Irish Sea. Here on the foreshore, along all the sandy inlets were hundreds of Wigeon and Teal. Amongst them we managed to pick out many Dunlin and a couple of Black-tailed Godwits.

Continuing along the paved footpath towards the residential area, we spotted a garden with several bird feeders and quickly added Blue Tit, Great Tit and Chaffinch. In a nearby tree high up, several Goldfinch were twittering loudly with a male Reed Bunting perched lower down. On our way back to the coach we passed the bowling green where a pair of Pied Wagtails were searching for grubs and insects. A most welcome addition at the marina was a new mobile food van with outside seating. This proved extremely popular with the group judging by the number of hot baps and drinks bought. The hot chocolate was absolutely “to die for”!



Pied Wagtail



Ruddy Turnstone

Back on the warm coach again, through a busy Lancaster and on to **Hest Bank** situated on the eastern side of Morecambe Bay. Here a good path followed the shoreline. Finally the overcast conditions gave way to a weak, watery sun and the temperature rose to a balmy 3°C. A Red-breasted Merganser was bobbing around out to sea, with several Great-crested Grebe and Eider in the vicinity. Foraging amongst the rocks and small pools left by the out-going tide were the usual waders, Redshank, Turnstone, and Oystercatchers with Black-headed Gulls running around and in-between them.



Common Redshank

The afternoon was passing all too quickly as we made our final stop at 3.40 pm by the **Heysham Nuclear Power Station**. A short walk brought us to the rocky foreshore and what a spectacle unfolded before our eyes! There were literally hundreds and hundreds of birds present, foraging, feeding, preening and resting. There was a minimum of 300 Oystercatchers, their black and white plumage, orange legs and bills highlighted well against the background of grey rocks and sandy beach, plenty of Wigeon, Shelduck and

Redshank. Cormorants on the rocks were drying their wings and a lone Heron stood like a sentinel in the gently lapping waves. On the crowded foreshore keen eyes

found not one, but five Pale-bellied Brent Geese. Amongst the numerous Black-headed Gulls were some Herring and Lesser Black-backs. As we were walking back to the coach, we saw the couple who were Redstart watching at Knott End. They had persevered despite the cold and were finally rewarded. The bird returned (to where we had been) and showed well for some time. Isn't that just birding! You win some, you lose some.

It was a very contented and relaxed group travelling back to Wilmslow after a great day's birding, the number of birds seen totalling 59.

Photos by Robert D

BARBARA P

Finally we have a drawing of birding at Glasson Dock by Group member Paul Brook.



NEXT MONTH'S MEETING

The next indoor meeting will be on Thursday 3rd April **starting at 7:15pm.**

The meeting will commence with the AGM at 7:15pm, followed by a short talk entitled "Romania – Carpathian Mountains & Danube Delta" by Robert. Afterwards we will be having an end of season buffet and social event.

Hope to see you all then.

NEWSLETTER CONTRIBUTIONS

Still required – your articles for the newsletter. Tell us all about that birding holiday of a lifetime or that unusual visitor to your garden bird table. Send any interesting photos you have taken on our coach trips.

Deadline is the Thursday before the meeting.